

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 1282

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SECSTATE PASS TO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES AND AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ELAB, UY, AR, US

SUBJECT: AFL-CIO OPERATION SOLIDARITY VISIT TO URUGUAY

REF: (A) STATE 046191, (B) STATE 062114; (C) BUENOS AIRES 1711,
(D) MONTEVIDEO 1049 (NOTAL), (E) BUENOS AIRES 1888 (NOTAL),
(F) MONTEVIDEO 1077 (NOTAL), (G) MONTEVIDEO 1130 (NOTAL),
(H) MONTEVIDEO 1139 (NOTAL), (I) MONTEVIDEO 1150 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. "OPERATION SOLIDARITY," A VISIT BY AFL-CIO LEADERS TO URUGUAY MARCH 21-24, WAS A "FRATERNAL" VISIT, BUT ASPECTS OF VISIT HERE HAD DEFINITE POLITICAL CHARACTER WHICH BOTH IN TIME-FRAME OF VISIT AND IN ITS AFTERMATH COULD HAVE IMPACT ON FUTURE RELATIONS WITH GOU AND, WE ASSUME, WITH GOA, BOTH IN CONTEXT OF GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND IN OUR INTERESTS IN TRADE UNION DEVELOPMENT. FROM MANNER IN WHICH VISIT WAS ARRANGED AND CARRIED OUT, IT SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN MOTIVATED MORE BY DESIRE TO FOSTER AFL-CIO RELATIONS WITH ARGENTINE CGT THAN TO PROVIDE FRATERNAL SUPPORT TO FELLOW TRADE UNIONISTS IN URUGUAY. END SUMMARY.

2. "OPERATION SOLIDARITY," BILLED AS A FRATERNAL VISIT BETWEEN THE AFL-CIO AND URUGUAYAN ORGANIZED LABOR, AND DISCUSSED IN THE DEPARTMENT AS ONE WITHOUT POLITICAL OVERTONES, WAS NOT A COMPLETE SUCCESS INsofar AS URUGUAY IS CONCERNED ALTHOUGH IT MAY HAVE AC-

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COMPLISHED AFL-CIO OBJECTIVES VIS-A-VIS THE ARGENTINE CGT. RESPON-

SIBILITY FOR THE ARRANGEMENTS RESTED WITH "AIFLD" ACCORDING TO WHAT WE WERE TOLD. SINCE AIFLD NO LONGER EXISTS AS AN INSTITUTION IN URUGUAY, RESPONSIBILITY FOR PLANNING THE VISIT RESTED WITH US TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVE ALVIN WARREN WHO IS HERE AS A PRIVATE CITIZEN WITHOUT ANY CONNECTION WITH THIS EMBASSY AND CHARGED WITH GIVING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE URUGUAYAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT. AS APPROPRIATE GESTURES IN CONNECTION WITH THE VISIT OF THE AFL-CIO GROUP, THE CHARGE HOSTED AN IN-HOUSE LUNCHEON FOR THEM AND THE LABATT HOSTED A RECEPTION IN THEIR HONOR TO WHICH URUGUAYAN TRADE UNION LEADERS WERE INVITED.

3. REFTEL (B) CONTAINED SUGGESTIONS FOR TIMING OF MEETING WITH CGT LEADERS. REFTEL (V) FROM BUENOS AIRES TOLD US THAT PLANS FOR XC THE AFL-CIO AND CGT MEETING WERE NOT BE RELEASED TO URUGUAYAN LABOR LEADERS AND THAT THE CGT WOULD ADVISE THE URUGUAYANS "IF AND AS IT DEEMS APPROPRIATE." NOT ONLY WITH RESPECT TO URUGUAYAN LABOR BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY WITH THE GOU, THERE THUS EXISTED THE FACT OF LABOR NEGOTIATIONS IN MONTEVIDEO BETWEEN THE US LABOR MOVEMENT AND THAT OF A THIRD COUNTRY ON THE EVE OF THE LONG EXPECTED COUP IN ARGENTINA. BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBLE MISINTERPRETATIONS INVOLVED AND OUT OF SIMPLE CONSIDERATIONS OF COURTESY, WE SUGGESTED TO WARREN THAT HE INFORM THE GOU LABOR MINISTER OF THE INTENDED MEETING. WARREN DECLINED TO DO SO, STATING THIS WOULD BE DISCUSSED WITH THE GROUP AFTER ITS ARRIVAL. AT THE LUNCHEON, THE CHARGE SUGGESTED TWICE THAT IT WOULD, IN HIS OPINION, BE WISE FOR THE AFL-CIO GROUP TO INFORM THE MINISTER OF LABOR. THE GROUP SAID THEY WOULD CONSIDER IT, POSSIBLY IN CONJUNCTION WITH THEIR PLANS TO CALL ON THE MINISTER ON MARCH 23.

4. THE PRESENCE OF THE CGT DELEGATION WAS REPORTED BY A MONTEVIDEO PAPER WHICH HAS CONSISTENTLY CRITICIZED THE US ON A WIDE RANGE OF INTERNATIONAL POLICIES. THE PAPER REPORTED THAT CGT LEADER CASILDO HERRERAS HAD "SLIPPED INTO" URUGUAY "INCOGNITO", POSSIBLY TO "PARTICIPATE IN A MEETING ORGANIZED BY THE AFL-CIO." (REF (D)). EMBASSY BUENOS AIRES REPORTED IN REF (E) THAT HERRERAS HAD DEPARTED BA FOR MONTEVIDEO ON MARCH 20 TO "HEAD DELEGATION DURING MARCH 24 NEGOTIATIONS" AND "TO AVOID ARREST DURING ANTICIPATED COUP." THUS, THE MEETING WITH THE CGT TOOK PLACE ON THE VERY DAY OF THE ARGENTINE COUP AND THE PRESS AT LEAST IMPLIED THAT THE MEETING WAS SOMETHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

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5. AS STATED, THE MINISTER OF LABOR WAS TO RECEIVE THE AFL-CIO GROUP ON MARCH 23. SHORTLY AFTER ARRIVAL, MCLELLAN TOLD THE LABATT THAT HE HAD A PROBLEM IN THAT THE CGTU OFFICERS HAD TOLD HIM THE MINISTER WOULD NOT ALLOW THEM TO ACCOMPANY THE AFL-CIO GROUP ON THE CALL. MCLELLAN EXPLAINED THAT TRADE UNION PROTOCOL REQUIRED THE PRESENCE OF THE URUGUAYANS. APPARENTLY, THE DESIRED PRESENCE OF THE CGTU LEADERS HAD NOT BEEN REPORTED TO THE MINISTER WHEN THE

APPOINTMENT WAS MADE. MCLELLAN'S VIEW WAS THAT SINCE THE GOU POINTED TO THE CGTU IN ILO MEETINGS AS THE LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE URUGUAYAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT, THERE WAS NO REASON FOR THE MINISTER TO DENY THAT STATUS TO THEM IN URUGUAY. (THE FACT IS THAT THE MINISTER SEES NO TRADE UNION LEADERS AND LEAVES CONTACTS WITH THEM WITH THE MILITARY OFFICERS IN HIS MINISTRY.) AS A RESULT, THE AFL-CIO GROUP DECIDED TO CANCEL THE APPOINTMENT WITH THE MINISTER. HOWEVER, THE MATTER WAS SMOOTHED OVER BY WARREN'S LEGAL COUNSEL AND THE MINISTER INVITED MCLELLAN TO HIS HOME FOR AN INFORMAL CHAT WHICH WAS REPORTED BY MCLELLAN TO HAVE BEEN VERY CORDIAL IN NATURE. AT THAT TIME MCLELLAN DID INFORM THE MINISTER OF THE MEETINGS WITH THE CGT THE NEXT DAY. THE MINISTER COMMENTED LATER TO THE CHARGE THAT HE HAD SEEN MCLELLAN AT HIS HOME AND HAD HAD A GOOD CONVERSATION WITH HIM. THE "URUGUAYAN PORTION" OF THE TRIP ENDED THE EVENING OF MARCH 23 WITH AN AUSTERE RECEPTION HOSTED BY THE CGTU. THE NEXT DAY WAS, AS WE SAID, DEVOTED TO THE CGT.

6. REFTEL (F) REPORTED THAT MCLELLAN HAD INTERCEDED WITH COL. BENTANCUR OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOR WITH RESPECT TO PROTECTION FOR HERRERAS. OUR SEPARATE REPORT PPG HAS COMMENTED AT LENGTH ON THE HERRERAS AFFAIR AND WARREN'S RELATIONSHIP TO IT. IN ALL FAIRNESS, HOWEVER, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT WARREN'S CONSTANT ASSOCIATION WITH HERRERAS PREVENTED HIS REARREST BY URUGUAYAN SECURITY FORCES, BUT THIS ASSOCIATION HAS HAD ITS FALLOUT HERE BOTH WITH RESPECT TO THE EMBASSY AND TO WARREN IN CONNECTION WITH HIS FUTURE DEALINGS IN URUGUAY.

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